

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) and Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) continued the fight to pass HR 589, the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Expansion Act. Reps. Scott and Lee met today with Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA), and discussed the possibility of bringing HR 589 to the House floor for a vote.

The Act extends emergency benefits to long-term unemployed workers by providing 14 weeks of emergency unemployment benefits to people who, while actively searching for employment, have exhausted all their benefits yet are still unemployed. Introduced in early February, HR 589 has not been considered by the Ways and Means Committee, the Committee with sole jurisdiction over the bill. The House Leadership has also not exercised its power to bring the bill directly to the floor of the House. Reps. Scott and Lee recently wrote a letter to the House Republican leadership on the issue, and that letter led to today's meeting.

"In the past, Congress has designated unemployment insurance as emergency spending and has extended the program when the national unemployment rate is higher than 7.2%," said Rep. Scott. "Now we are at 8.8% nationally and for every new job opening there are almost 5 people who are unemployed. For the millions that are left behind, this assistance is desperately needed. Furthermore, last December we passed a tax package with about \$42 billion in tax cuts for multimillionaires without requiring an offset. Now we are paying for this choice, and we are not prioritizing the assistance that families need. This is the message that we conveyed to Speaker Boehner and Leader Cantor."

"We had a productive meeting with the Speaker and the Majority Leader to discuss this critical issue of providing aid for long-term unemployed workers," said Representative Barbara Lee. "With almost 5 unemployed workers for every available job, it would be unacceptable to allow millions of displaced workers who have exhausted their benefits to have no safety net to help make ends meet. Speaker Boehner encouraged us to work with the House Ways and Means Committee to move this bill forward, and while we will certainly do so, we maintain that these long term unemployed workers deserve a floor vote now. Frankly, where there is a will there is a way, and we hope that the Republican leadership will show some serious will to move this vital effort forward."

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